

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 199019
ORIGIN AF-04

INFO OCT-01 PRS-01 ISO-00 INR-04 /010 R

DRAFTED BY AF/P:WHOLLIDAY:SAH

APPROVED BY AF:WCHARROP

-----120350 201727Z /41

P R 201704Z AUG 77

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY LAGOS PRIORITY

INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

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LIMDIS FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY MOOSE

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PDIP, AO

SUBJECT: ANGOLA: WASHINGTON POST EDITORIAL

REF: STATE 198803

FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF LEAD EDITORIAL IN WASHINGTON POST
SATURDAY, AUGUST 20:

FOR MORE THAN SEVEN MONTHS POST REPORTER LEON DASH
TREKKED ACROSS THE VAST REACHES OF SOUTHERN ANGOLA, GUIDED
BY GUERRILLAS OF UNITA. THIS GROUP LOST OUT IN THE CIVIL
WAR ATTENDING THE BIRTH OF INDEPENDENT ANGOLA LAST YEAR
BUT LIVED TO FIGHT ON. MR DASH FOUND THAT, THOUGH THE
GOVERNMENT MAY CONTROL THE TOWNS, UNITA EXERCISES EFFECTIVE
CONTROL OF THE TEXAS-SIZED COUNTRYSIDE AND ENJOYS BROAD
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PAGE 02 STATE 199019

POPULAR SUPPORT AMONG THE OVIMBUNDO PEOPLE, THE DOMINANT
TRIBE IN THE SOUTH AND THE LARGEST ONE IN THE COUNTRY
OVERALL. UNITA LEADER JONAS SAVIMBI NOW INTENDS TO FORM A
CONVENTIONAL ARMY QUOTE TO FIGHT THE CUBANS UNQUOTE, WHO
STICK TO THE TOWNS; BY HIS COUNT THEY HAVE LOST 1,000 MEN
SINCE THE GOVERNMENT OF AGOSTINHO NETO TOOK POWER. THE WAR,
A SPASMODIC BUT SAVAGE AFFAIR, COULD GO ON INDEFINITELY,

REPORTER DASH BELIEVES.

SO MUCH FOR THE QUOTE SOVIET STRONGHOLD UNQUOTE THAT, IN 1975, AMERICAN OFFICIALS CLAIMED ANGOLA WOULD BECOME IF THE CONGRESS HALTED SECRET SUPPORT FOR THE ANTI-NETO FORCES, AS IT DID. WITHOUT DEPENDING ON THE UNITED STATES, AND WITH HIS NATIONALIST CREDENTIALS PERHAPS ENHANCED FOR IT, MR SAVIMBI HAS STAYED IN THE FIELD. AND NOT ONLY UNITA IN THE SOUTH BUT FNLA IN THE NORTH GNAWS AT THE GOVERNMENT'S TERRITORY AND PRESTIGE. MR NETO RECENTLY SUFFERED THE EMBARRASSMENT OF HAVING TO ASK FOR MORE CUBANS TO KEEP HIM IN POWER. EVEN SO, LATE IN MAY A COUP WAS ATTEMPTED AGAINST HIM, BY AN EX-MINISTER PURPORTING TO BE MORE PRO-SOVIET THAN HE.

IN FEBRUARY MR NETO ASKED THE NEW AMERICAN ADMINISTRATION FOR RECOGNITION. FOR WHATEVER REASON, THE ADMINISTRATION HUNG BACK FROM RESPONDING. THUS THE RUSSIANS AND CUBANS GOT THE OPPORTUNITY TO DEMONSTRATE THE INEFFECTIVENESS OF THEIR PATRONAGE. NOW WITH THE LUANDA GOVERNMENT OBVIOUSLY NOT MEETING THE BASIC TEST OF CONTROLLING THE COUNTRY, RECOGNITION HAS RECEDED FURTHER INTO THE FUTURE. WE WOULD SAY THAT AMERICAN POLICY IS OF LITTLE RELEVANCE TO THE SITUATION IN ANGOLA. THE PORTUGUESE BEQUEATHED ANGOLANS A BROKEN COUNTRY UNPREPARED TO GOVERN ITSELF AS A UNITARY NATION. THE TRIBES AND REGIONS ARE FIGHTING IT OUT. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 STATE 199019

AGAINST THIS STRUGGLE, AN EFFORT TO ESTABLISH INFLUENCE WITH ANY OF THE FACTIONS SEEMS OUT OF PLACE AND UNNECESSARY. THE UNITED STATES CAN DO LITTLE MORE THAN EXPRESS ITS SYMPATHY FOR THE ANGUISH OF ANGOLA--FROM THE SIDELINES. CHRISTOPHER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, TEXT, LIBERATION FRONTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 20-Aug-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977STATE199019
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: WHOLLIDAY:SAH
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770301-1024
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770840/aaaabhlk.tel
Line Count: 98
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: c9b28457-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN AF
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: 77 STATE 198803
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 03-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1537834
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ANGOLA: WASHINGTON POST EDITORIAL
TAGS: PDIP, SOPN, AO, UNITA, (DASH, LEON)
To: LAGOS
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/c9b28457-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009